

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman**

**For Immediate Release
2011/797**

May 19, 2011

REMARKS

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Delivers Introductory Remarks for President Obama's Speech on Events in the
Middle East and North Africa, and U.S. Policy in the Region**

**May 19, 2011
Ben Franklin Room
Washington, D.C.**

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you all, and welcome to the State Department. I am delighted to be here to welcome the President as well as our colleagues from the Diplomatic Corps, Senator Kerry, and senior officials from across our government, and especially the many young Foreign Service and Civil Servants who are here today.

Mr. President, from your first days in office you have charged us with implementing a bold new approach for America's foreign policy – a new blueprint for how we advance our values, project our leadership, and strengthen our partnerships. We have seen that in a changing world, America's leadership is more essential than ever, but that we often must lead in new and innovative ways.

And so, Mr. President, these Foreign Service Officers and these Civil Servants, the men and women of the State Department and USAID, work every day to translate your vision into real results – results on the ground in nearly every country in the world. That is why the work we have done to provide them with the tools and resources they need to perform their mission is so important. And it's why we need to keep making the case for those resources.

Because alongside our colleagues in the Defense Department, America's diplomats and development experts of the State Department and USAID are on the front lines of protecting America's security, advancing America's interests, and projecting America's values. As a wave of change continues to sweep across the Middle East and North Africa, they are carrying our diplomacy and development far beyond the embassy walls – engaging with citizens in the streets and through social networks as they seek to move from protests to politics; with NGOs and businesses working to create new economic opportunities; and with transitional leaders trying to build the institutions of genuine democracy. They represent the best of America, and I am so proud to have them as our face to the world.

Mr. President, it is fitting that you have chosen to come here to the State Department to speak about the dramatic changes we have witnessed around the world this year.

Now, on the back wall of this historic Benjamin Franklin Room is a portrait of the leader of Tunis, given as a gift in 1865 by the people of Tunisia in honor of the enduring friendship between our nations at the end of our Civil War. A century and a half later, Tunisians – and courageous citizens from across the region – have given the world another gift: a new opening to work together for democracy and dignity, for peace and opportunity. These are the values that made America a great nation, but they do not belong to us alone. They are truly universal. And it is profoundly in our interest that more people in more places claim them as their own.

This moment belongs to the people of the Middle East and North Africa. They have seized control of their destiny and will make the choices that determine how the future of the region unfolds.

But, for America, this is a moment that calls out for clear vision, firm principles, and a sophisticated understanding of the indispensable role our country can and must play in the world. Those have been the hallmarks of President Obama's leadership from his first day in office. So, it is with great confidence and faith in our future that I welcome the President of the United States, Barack Obama. (Applause.)

#